



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

October 6, 2005

News Release

FORMER PRIEST IN LEESBURG PLEADS NO CONTEST TO ATTEMPTED POSSESSION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

-- Plea is latest in Internet child pornography probe that has netted more than 1,200 arrests --

LOUDON COUNTY, VA – Allan J. Doody, Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Washington, D.C., and the Loudon County Sheriff's Office, today announced that Robert Brooks, 72, a former Catholic priest in Leesburg, Virginia, has pleaded no contest to a state charge of attempting to possess child pornography.

Brooks, the former pastor at St. John the Apostle Catholic Church in Leesburg, entered his plea of *nolo contendere* in Loudon Circuit Court yesterday. By pleading no contest, Brooks agreed to be subject to the same possible sentence as if he had been convicted of the same offense after a trial by jury or the Court sitting without a jury. As a result, he faces a possible maximum sentence of five years in prison. Sentencing for Brooks is scheduled for December 12, 2005.

In a proffer of evidence submitted to the court, the Virginia Commonwealth's Attorney stated that ICE agents began their investigation of Brooks when they discovered evidence that he had used his credit card to pay for access to child pornography websites in May 2003. ICE agents interviewed Brooks in January 2004 and conducted a consensual search of his computer in March 2004, where they retrieved 150 images that agents considered to be child pornography, according to the proffer.

In September 2004, ICE agents began working with the Loudon County Sheriff's Office on the case. The Virginia Commonwealth Attorney's Office promptly notified the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, at which time Brooks left his post. A Loudon Grand Jury indicted Brooks in February 2005.

Brooks is the latest individual to be caught up in a global ICE child pornography investigation that has targeted an Internet billing company based in Minsk, Belarus and its affiliated entities in the United States. To date, the probe has resulted in the arrest of more than 1,200 people worldwide.

In January 2004, the Belarus firm was charged with money laundering as well as providing credit card billing services for 50 child pornography websites worldwide and operating child porn websites

on its own. Three officers of the company were arrested in Europe and have been extradited to the United States. All three of those officers have pleaded guilty in Newark, N.J., as have four officers of two affiliated companies in Florida and California.

Having dismantled the leadership of the enterprise, ICE agents in domestic ICE offices and 52 Attaché offices worldwide turned their focus to those who purchased child porn subscriptions from these sites in the United States and abroad.

As part of the investigation, ICE agents have arrested more than 236 child porn subscribers in the United States and foreign law enforcement, acting on ICE leads, have arrested more than 1,000 individuals in Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Japan, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

This global Internet child pornography investigation is part of ICE's Operation Predator, a nationwide initiative to safeguard children against Internet child pornographers, criminal alien sex offenders, child sex tourists, and human traffickers.

Members of the public wishing to report suspicious activity may contact ICE at 1-866-DHS-2ICE or Operation.Predator@dhs.gov. ICE's non-governmental partners include World Vision at http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/wvusuf/nsf/stable/globalissues_stp and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at <http://www.missingkids.org/>. Additional information about Operation Predator is posted at www.ice.gov.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). ICE seeks to prevent acts of terrorism by targeting the people, money and materials that support terror and criminal networks.